

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION

F-15E, S/N 91-0335

RAF LAKENHEATH, UNITED KINGDOM

11 AUGUST 2000

On 11 August 2000, at 0123L, in Hush House One, a ground run crew was performing an operational check of the number two engine on F-15E S/N 91-0335, assigned to the 494th Fighter Squadron, 48th Fighter Wing, RAF Lakenheath, United Kingdom. Approximately four seconds after the mishap engine operator advanced the number two throttle to afterburner, the aircraft's arresting hook disconnected from the holdback assembly. The aircraft moved rapidly forward and slightly left, penetrating the hush house doors. Immediately after impact the mishap engine operator shut down both engines. The mishap engine operator and the mishap back seat observer safely egressed the aircraft. The mishap ground man and the mishap console operator safely egressed the hush house. The mishap engine operator sustained a minor left shoulder strain and minor cuts to his left hand. These injuries were not permanent and no duty days were lost. No other military or civilian personnel were injured and there were no fatalities. The impact caused extensive damage to the hush house doors. The forward third of the aircraft, both engines, the right external tank, nose gear, engine inlet variable ramps, and canopy were significantly damaged.

The accident was caused by failure to properly connect the holdback assembly to the aircraft arresting hook. Five factors substantially contributed to the accident: Failure to Follow Technical Order Procedures/Regulatory Guidance, Habit Pattern Interruption, Channelized Attention, Established Practice, and Training. First, there were eight violations of Technical Orders and other regulatory guidance that set the stage for unsafe operations. Second, the mishap console operator's normal habit of connecting the holdback assembly immediately after positioning the aircraft in the hush house was interrupted by the discovery of munitions on the aircraft. These munitions should have been downloaded before the aircraft was towed to the hush house. Third, as the mishap console operator and mishap ground man connected the holdback assembly to the aircraft arresting hook, their attention was fixated on inserting the quick-disconnect pin rather than on the proper positioning of the arresting hook in the holdback assembly. Fourth, while Technical Orders require the engine run operator to connect the holdback assembly, the established practice at RAF Lakenheath is for someone else, usually the console operator, to connect the holdback device. Fifth, and finally, there were deficiencies in both the formal training of engine operators, and the informal training of console operators.

"Under 10 U.S.C. 2254(d), any opinion of the accident investigators as to the cause of, or the factors contributing to, the accident set forth in the accident investigation report may not be considered as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding arising from an aircraft accident, nor may such information be considered an admission of liability by the United States or by any person referred to in those conclusions or statement."